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# WORSHIP.

— BY —

RICHARD H. THOMAS, M. D.

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

—Jno. iv, 24.

BALTIMORE.

1889.

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# EXPLANATORY.

The following essay appeared in successive numbers of the "*Friends' Review*," early in the present year.

It is now reprinted, with some slight alterations, in response to requests from different parts of the country.

R. H. T.

714 N. HOWARD STREET,
BALTIMORE, MD.
1889.

# WORSHIP.

## INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP.

*Jesus saith unto her, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*—

Jno. iv, 21–24.

The words "God is a Spirit," contain the foundation thought of all that our Lord said on the subject of worship to the woman of Samaria, both as regards its place, time and manner.

*The Place and Time of Worship.*—When Jesus said "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father," he was uttering more than a mere statement of fact. He was really proving it to the woman with a consistent, though very condensed argument. The underlying meaning is,

that for worship to be possible, the worshipper must be where he can approach God either directly or through some mediator. Therefore it is necessary for him to go where he can so meet with him. But the God, who upholds the world, is a Spirit. Men, who are partly spirit and partly body, are confined by outward limitations; but he is equally present everywhere, keeping everything in its proper place, and governing all things. Therefore, there can be no such thing as a holy mountain, or any locality where he is especially to be found, for all places on the earth are equally holy, and equally near him.

The same argument applies to the time of worship. God is a Spirit. As such he is not only equally present at all places, but at all times, and if so, then to all men, in the sense that he is everywhere, though in the case of men there are two ways of being near to God; one, in the way of which I am now speaking, which they cannot avoid, and the other in a way that they can avoid, that is, in respect to their will and character. If these considerations be accepted, there can be no such thing as a priesthood open to one class in the church and not equally open to all. If one believer is in "Holy Orders," all are, or may be,

whatever their outward position in the church. There can be no such thing as official nearness to God. The only way in which anyone can draw near to him is by becoming more like him, that is, coming into inward harmony with him. There is, therefore, in the worship of God, as far as any individual is concerned, no limitation as to place, time, surroundings or outward condition. The only limitation is found in the inward condition of the soul. This brings us to—

*The Manner of Worship.*—The suppressed argument here is similar. It is, that worship to be acceptable must be in conformity with the character of the Being who is worshipped. This is true in regard to any service that we may render to any one with whom we associate. The service we render to a man will differ from that which we render to a child, not on account of a difference in us, but because of a difference in them. From this it follows, since God is a Spirit, that the worship rendered to him is to be a spiritual worship. For the same reason the worship must not only be spiritual, but truthful, because from the nature of the case no deception is possible in communications between the universal all-seeing Spirit of God and our spirits. Therefore no outward act in itself can

constitute worship. It must of necessity be spontaneous in its character, or it will lack the elements of spirituality or of truth.

The thought conveyed by the word "worship" in our Lord's words to the woman of Samaria is that of bowing down, of prostration. Here the reference is to the attitude of the soul before the Lord. As there is no true prostration of soul before him without submission of soul, no one can worship in the true sense of the word, whose intentions and plans are consciously out of line with the Lord's will. If God is everywhere, and equally near to us at all times, and if the essence of spiritual worship consists in our inward attitude before him, then it must be that there is nothing in which we can rightly engage that may not be an act of worship, and nothing, however it may simulate worship in its outward form, that is worship without this inward condition of soul. There is no form or ceremony that can by itself be an act of worship, neither can there be such a thing as worship by proxy. The fact that everyone is worshipping around me does not make me a worshipper, unless I am myself in a right attitude of mind. If a man in loving loyalty to the Lord Jesus, and in dependence on him performs some simple service for

another, even though it be menial in its character, or something which is only his duty to do, he is a worshipper then and there. To one whose eyes have been opened to see the truth, all places are not equally common, but equally holy, for are they not hallowed by the presence of his Lord? Attending to his daily duties, or rising from the pillow that he has made with a heap of stones, he says: "This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven." He has learned also not to call anything that God has cleansed common or unclean.

Not that we are not to have special seasons for retirement and prayer. It is almost in proportion as we have these quiet times with the Lord that we are able to live a cheerful life of continual service and of worship. We are not, as far as we have any reason to believe, more acceptable to him in the one state than we are in the other; but we need the quiet, and we need the activity. In the first we gain strength and may learn the lessons that our experience has been intended to teach us; in the second, we put these lessons into practice. These times of retirement are not alone for prayer, but for hearing what the Lord would teach us, as we read in the Bible, or meditate on the things of God,

or contemplate and consider the High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Here again is it true that we come without the need of any form. We come honestly, humbly, trustingly and willing to be taught. How often in these quiet times do we find that our judgment, which may have been clouded by the commotion of the differing interests that surround us, becomes clear.

As we do this, he who has taught us the true way of worship comes, and shows us how to put his lessons into practice.

## II.

## United Worship.

*God is a Spirit. John iv. 24.*
*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Matthew xviii, 20.*

*Place.*—We saw in the last chapter how Jesus taught the women of Samaria that, as "God is a Spirit," and therefore equally present everywhere, there can be no pre-eminently holy place on earth, for all places are alike holy, and every place where sin is committed, equally desecrated. Christ substitutes no outward spot to succeed Jerusalem, for it is not places that God desires, but people.

This is still more clearly brought out in the words: "*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" Here the place of the gathering receives absolutely no consideration. It makes no difference at all. It may be by the roadside, on the ocean, in the desert, in a barn, or in a building devoted to the worship of God. It is all the same. The beauty and the costliness of an edifice may bring glory to those who have built it, may prove a delight to the aesthetic sense, but is not to the glory of God, who "dwelleth not in temples made with hands." How often

do we see evidence in these elegant structures of a desire to be seen of men, for the prominent parts are built with great care and expense, while those parts which are at the back, and seen only by God and the poor, are of very inferior quality. This was not so in the medieval ages, when men really thought they were building a place for God to call his own. The place, then, that is chosen to meet in, has nothing to do with the matter. It is merely a question of convenience to those who are coming together. The only thing of importance is that it should in its construction be made as far as possible to serve the end in view, that it should not pander to the love of show, so as to discourage the poor of this world from coming, nor be forbidding in its appearance.

*The Assembly.*—What is necessary to the gathered assembly in order that it may be a truly worshipping one? Simply that those who come shall meet in the name of the Lord. There is no reference, direct or indirect, to the need that any church officer, or minister, should be present. As Tertullian said in the third century, "Where there are three, though they be laymen, there is a church."* This reference

* "Sed ubi tres, ecclesiae est, licit laici." See Hatch's Organization of the Early Christian Church, p. 122, English Edition, 1881.

to "laymen" shows how even after the unscriptural distinction between "clergy" and "laity" had become recognized in the church, the original idea survived. The question is not, What position in the church do they occupy? but, Are they gathered together in the name of Christ?

The emphasis then is not to be laid on the place, nor the time of the gathering, nor on the number who assemble, but on the spirit with which they come together. An assembly gathered in the name of Christ means that those who so come together are met for the purpose of engaging in the work that he is engaged in; just as the United States Minister to Great Britain, acting in the name of the United States, represents his country. Those who meet in the name of Christ meet as representatives of Christ. If so, then they are met not only to carry on his work, but to carry it on in his spirit, which is the spirit of self-renunciation and of love. They are met also to learn of him as to the best method of conducting the work that he has laid on them, and to be brought by him into harmony with himself. This implies that they believe in him, and are come in the expectation that he will fulfill his word to

them, and meet with them, not by deputy, but in person. They are not merely a congregation of individuals; but, if they have truly come together in the name of Christ, they have come together in a deeper and truer sense than is meant by any outward association. They are united in heart. It is a gathering together of their spirits as well as of their bodies. It is this inward agreement that Jesus lays such stress upon in the same connection as that of gathering together in his name, and it is in response to this inward agreement that the Lord makes himself known to his assembled people. As in this unity of spirit they present to him their needs and their longings, he comes and gives to one guidance, to another the balm of comfort, to another divine strength, to another divine enlightenment, to another, it may be, the word of forgiveness. All are blessed by him, and mutually helped by one another.

The words, "*I am there in the midst of them*," is not to be regarded as a parallel passage with the promise of Christ's dwelling with and in the individual Christian. He meets with his followers who are met together, in a sense that is not applicable to the individual believer. It is true that there is a peculiar blessing that comes to souls when they are alone with the

Lord, and separated even from the praying multitude; but this does not alter the other fact. There is no way to attain to the true power and work of the Church without this united coming together in the spirit of the Lord. It is there that his power to guide the membership as a body is seen, as well as to guide individually. It is there that the collective power of the Church is manifested so that those who are out of the way are brought back to the fold, the mourners comforted, and the cold-hearted restored. If the people of God could only understand that the true effectiveness of a church gathering lies in this, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst of them, and that the method by which this is to be attained is not by form or arrangement, but by coming together in his name, we should realize more than we do the great power that is in the gathered Church, be it large or small. Many attend places of worship with a view chiefly to their own edification; but, while it is entirely proper to desire one's own blessing, this is not the primary object of a church meeting. It is for the united labor of the hearts of those who have come together that the Lord's will may be done in them and through them, and that his work may be carried on.

## III.

## On the Method of Holding Meetings for Worship.

If we glance at the meetings of the early Christians, as referred to in the New Testament, we shall see, that whether they came together to wait upon the Lord for power (Acts i, 14; ii. 1; iv, 24–30), or for guidance (Acts xi, 1–18; xiii. 1–3), or for deliberation (Acts xv, 4–29), or for mutual edification (I Cor, xiv. 23–31; Acts xx, 7–12), they did so without formality, and without special arrangement. This is shown clearly by the spontaneous character of their reported prayers, and still more by Paul's directions to the Corinthians as to how to hold their meetings. He gives them, indeed, a word of caution, saying, "Let all things be done decently and in order," but this very caution shows that he was not intending to change their method of holding meetings, but only to guard against excesses that might bring reproach and injury upon them. While he warns them not to put too high an estimate upon the gift of tongues, he points out to them the blessing that would rest upon their

work if they all prophesied. So far from confining the vocal exercises to the officers, it was not necessary that even the elders should preach (I Tim. v, 17), and he exhorts all the Christians generally to covet earnestly the best gifts, but rather that they should prophesy (I Cor. xiv, 1), and writes: "Ye may all prophesy one by one." (I Cor. xiv, 31.) The essential thing in these early gatherings was not the form, nor yet the individual who should speak, but the coming together with one accord in the common love of their Saviour.

It is to be freely admitted that the mere practice of the early Church, important as it is, does not of itself constitute a sufficient ground for following their example, in the greatly changed circumstances of time and place under which we live. We must inquire whether this practice was an accidental one, or whether it rested upon an underlying principle.

We have seen that in Christ's teachings the essential basis of true worship lay in a recognition of the fact that "*God is a Spirit,*" and that therefore the worship that he seeks is that which is in spirit and in truth. This emphasizes the necessity that it should be from the heart—that is, be natural and not forced; and that it should

be entirely truthful as far as each one who takes part in it is concerned. It follows naturally from this that worship should be spontaneous in its character. There can be no pre-arranged form that will always be the spontaneous, natural expression at all times of a worshiping assembly. The same conclusion must be reached in regard to a service that is in the charge and under the exclusive direction of one person, or of a set of persons. It is not possible for such week after week to know what will be the exercise that will be the natural and spontaneous utterance of the congregation. There is, therefore, great danger, where pre-arrangement and human leadership is practiced, of a loss in both these directions. That there is a loss in spontaneity no one can doubt. But there is almost equal danger of a loss in truthfulness, and consequently an absence of worship. The loss is, however, more than negative. It is positive. To take words on the lips that profess to be worship, but yet are not the true language of the heart, is a direct injury to the character and blunts the religious life. It is also demonstrably not what the Father seeks as worship. If this be so, can the followers of Christ, who are his visible representatives on the earth, be

in harmony with Him in the matter, if they officially encourage that which is not pleasing to Him? If we do so, can we be surprised at a lack of blessing upon our efforts? The world's charge of inconsistency against Christians is not a little owing to the mistaken zeal that encourages this very thing unintentionally by urging the mere utterance of expressions of trust and experience, without sufficiently insisting that no one should make use of them in the worship of God except those who realize them to be true.

Thorough spontaneity and truthfulness in worship cannot be reached, in the very nature of the case, by means that depend upon any human director to dictate who shall take part, or what shall be done. Such a service must always more or less partake of the character of a perfunctory exercise.

If there be no outward director, and the vocal exercises depend upon the personal sense of the various members of the congregation of what is required, the only basis upon which the meeting can be held is upon the basis of silence. Such a meeting, waiting as it does, for the individual action of its members, must wait till some individual comes forward with what is on his or her heart to say. While it is waiting, as no service

is pre-arranged, it must perforce be silent. The same is the case in the intervals that elapse between the vocal exercises. It does not follow, that the times of silence mean simply a waiting to see who is to speak next. We have seen that nothing outward is necessary to the worship of God. Therefore speech is not necessary, for the essential thing is the prostration of the soul before the Lord, in heartfelt submission to him. Speech is of importance only as it is the true expression of the language of the heart. Therefore the pauses of silence, so far from being waste time, are times of great opportunity for worship in spirit and in truth, when that which could not rightly be spoken to man, may be spoken to God. For, while it is true that every outward act of worship must be the truthful expression of the soul, it by no means follows that everything that is such is to be uttered in public.

Those who have met together are met, as we have before seen, not merely as so many isolated individuals, but as a united body. Not only with one another are they met; for if they are together in the name of Christ, he is with them. It is not therefore only for their individual interests that they have come, but for the edification of the body, and to carry on the

work of the Lord in the earth. Therefore, what is said is to have a bearing not only on the individual who is speaking, but on the others who are assembled with him. The question will then arise, Is the thought or the prayer that springs up in my mind one that is for the building up, or comfort, or teaching of the congregation? Here we have recourse to our Lord's word, "*There am I in the midst of them.*" He is there to take the direction of the exercises of the meeting, and to choose one and another from the company to act as his messengers, for the vocal exercises are not to be limited to any person or persons, for all who are in the right spirit may be called of the Lord to speak.

It was into such a meeting as this that Paul said if one who was unlearned (I Cor. xiv, 24-25) in the things of God, or unbelieving, should enter, he would be convinced of all, and judged of all, and falling down on his face he would confess that God was with them of a truth. Such a meeting as this must be free. Silence is not worship any more than any set form. Therefore this outward silence is not to be regarded as an end in itself. But silence must be observed in the very nature of the case, in order to maintain spontaneity and truthfulness in

worship, and because Christ is present with his Church, which is his body, and it is his prerogative to choose in what way and through whom he will teach them. Silence with him is blessed. But from the New Testament pattern we may conclude that as a rule human instruments will be employed, and we are told to pray for gifts of utterance (I Cor. xii, 31; xiv, 1). What is said may be long or brief; but, if it begin and end in accordance with the mind of the Spirit, it is to edification and in itself an act of worship.

Such a meeting is held on the apostolic pattern, and, what is more to the purpose, it is on apostolic principles also, and truly in the spirit of Christ. When will the Church of Christ recognize her true power, and understand that it does not come by arrangements, however elaborate, or by eloquence, however splendid, but that it is to be known by really meeting together in the name of Christ by those who are daily living in Him. The true attractiveness of a Christian church is the attractiveness of Christ himself. Then let us seek after that, if we desire to be the power in the world to bring men to him that we say we do. He unites us with himself in his work, and,

when we are gathered in his name, he has given us an unqualified promise that he will grant us all the strength, all the wisdom, and everything that we need in our great work, if we unite in asking for it; and yet we come together and are content with a little power and a little wisdom. It is as though all the wires were laid, and the arrangements perfected for the brilliant lighting of a great hall with the electric light, and we chose candles, or at the best only used one of the great lights. Let us live in his name, and let us come together in his name, and he will once more make the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. This has ever been the divine method, to ignore those forces which are most esteemed among men, and make use of that which they despise. In the line of his will Christ's Church is practically omnipotent.

In this regard there is an especial responsibility resting upon the Society of Friends. It has, in name at least, kept closer to the original type in the matter of worship than any other of the Lord's people. We are now hearing that this is one of the Quaker peculiarities that must be swept away with the advanced work of the Society in the great harvest field. But we have

seen that it is not a peculiarity of Quakerism, but of the gospel of Christ. If so, let us hold on to it, not traditionally, but in living faith in our Lord. Of all people we are most in the position to realize the full power and force of these things, because we are untrammeled with forms, and, at least, have the theory, and as I believe, not a little of the power. Let us not turn away from the right method because it may not always have been administered correctly, but let us study the method and learn how to use it, for it is the method that Christ has specially endorsed.

## IV.

### Consideration of Objections that may be urged against holding Meetings for United Worship on the Basis of Silence without Pre-arrangement of the Services.

*Objection 1st. Silence may be as formal as any other arrangement.* Silence, as a formal thing, is, of course, not to be pleaded for. We must distinguish between necessary and accidental forms. To have an appointed time and place for meetings is a form. Yet none can deny that it is a necessity, if any meeting is to be held for any purpose whatsoever. Our Lord taught, as we have seen, that there can be no worship but what is heartfelt and truthful. Therefore only those things can be regarded as acts of worship which are the natural and sincere utterance of the heart and mind. The Church, following the teaching of her Lord, should make arrangements for these and these only, and not adopt forms which encourage untruthfulness in what professes to be worship. On this principle the only practicable way upon

which a meeting for worship can be held, is on the basis of silence, In a pre-arranged, or regulated form of worship, it is impossible that the conductor shall understand the inner condition of those present sufficiently to be able to say what words they can take upon their lips truthfully. If he asks them to use them, he is officially encouraging them to do the very thing that Jesus said his Father did not seek, that is, worship that is not in truth. There is a far greater danger in this then than is generally supposed. Besides tending to dull the conscience, it has a direct tendency to make the service of God unreal, and divorced from the daily life of the individual. Even if it is allowed for the sake of the argument that the person in charge of the services may be guided at times to know what is needed by the congregation, this is so exceptional as not to interfere with the main proposition that is here stated. Now, while it is freely admitted that the pre-arranged method has often been the means of great blessing, this objection that it leads to a lack of sincerity in the public worship of God, cannot well be escaped.

The further necessity of having silence as a basis in united worship is seen, if our Lord's

assurance that he will meet with those who gather in his name means that he is there as the One who teaches them and directs them himself. This meaning is borne out by the context in which the assurance occurs; for he tells us that the ground on which their united prayers will be answered, and the reason why their decisions have such authority, is because of his presence with them. What does this mean, if not that he is there to guide them, either directly, or through instruments? If so, then, what can be so necessary to secure this guidance as that those who desire it shall be silent, waiting for him to choose how, or by whom he will teach them, and for what he will unite their hearts in prayer?

It is on these considerations that silence is to be looked upon, not as one of the accidental forms, like those of a pre-arranged service, but as one of the necessary forms on the same general basis as that of the arrangement of a stated time and place for meeting.

As persons may assemble at a place for worship in a formal spirit, so can they allow silence to become a mere form. If so, it is open to many of the objections that can be urged against other forms, though, even so, it has

some advantages. It is truthful at least in this, that the formalists do not take words on their lips that they do not mean. A meeting held on this basis is a very delicate test of the spiritual condition of the membership, and therefore shows the signal of danger sooner. It is better that a church that is dead should appear so, than that it should be a galvanized corpse, though there is no reason why it should be either.

*Objection 2d. A meeting so held is not attractive.* It is not claimed that silence as silence is attractive. But let us remember what is the true attractive power of a meeting for worship. We can hardly imagine Paul consulting with the elders at Corinth or Ephesus, as to the best means of making their gatherings outwardly attractive to the young people of those cities. I cannot recall a single passage that could be quoted on this point. If mere attractiveness is the object by itself, then I admit that it is not to be found in this way. To achieve this the Church has found that she needs to advise with other counsellors than Christ and his apostles, for these attractions are to be found in their perfection in places that are under the control, and carried on in the spirit of the god of this world. On this line the church cannot rival the

world successfully without resorting to means that no truly spiritual person of any denomination would altogether approve. But we are not to conclude from this that we are to pay no attention at all to the tastes and comfort of those whose good we seek. These things are not to be despised, but we are not to carry the desire for them so far as to yield one iota in a matter of principle; nor shall we be tempted to yield it, if we realize the true motive for holding our meetings on the basis of silence. We need to learn the true attraction of the Church of Christ. If we can but once thoroughly grasp this, we shall begin to use our power. We are bound to lose in a fight when the enemy is a greater master of the methods of our warfare than we are. But, if we learn how to fight by that method which is especially ours, and where the enemy cannot cope with us, we have learned the secret of abiding victory. Our power is a spiritual power. There is at least one door in every man's heart that is unguarded, and by which he can be reached. That door is only to be discovered by the Spirit of the Lord. When we are in the power and under the leading of the Spirit, then we too shall be able to enter it, and reach the man. More than this, when any man,

or any congregation, is in the Spirit of the Lord, it possesses a new attractive power that attracts to Christ. When in this Spirit one of two effects will be observed, either persons will be attracted to their meetings, or the members themselves will become individually such powers to attract, that others will be reached by them personally. The work of the Lord will prosper in their hands for the ingathering of souls, for the spread of righteousness in the earth, for the suppression of evil, or for the firm maintenance of the truth. In one, or all, of these ways will the power of Christ shine through them.

## V.

## Consideration of Objections that may be urged against holding Meetings for United Worship on the Basis of Silence without Pre-arrangement of the Services—*Continued.*

*Objection 3d. This method is adapted only to very spiritually-minded persons.* If it be remembered that what is advocated in this essay is not formal silence, but a silence that should naturally be over those who are come together to meet with the Lord Jesus, to learn of him, and to receive power from him for carrying on his work, I think it is not too much to say that this method is available, even for initial stages of Christian experience, and that such a meeting is well adapted to reach the unconverted.

The Church at large has taught for a long time, and that the proper way to conduct public worship, is to have it all mapped out beforehand. The result of this teaching has been that individuals, not accustomed to the simpler and freer method, often do not understand it. It may be quite difficult at times to make them understand

it, and, until they do, they will, of course, fail to derive the benefit that they should. The reason for this is not that the method is unsuited to their initial stages of experience, but is found in their previous education. It is, in short, not a difficulty that arises from the nature of the case, but from circumstances, and can, therefore, be overcome. Nor is this difficulty so general as is sometimes thought. I have often been surprised to find how readily many, who are entirely unused to it, can be brought to understand, when it is simply explained. Is it worth while to make this explanation? Yes, if we wish to make use of one of the most efficient means of developing strong Christian character.

The secret of producing strong Christian character in men and women is to bring them to an independent religious experience, in which they will not suppose that their chief spiritual strength is to come from their minister, or through any Church form or rite, but directly from the Lord Jesus Christ. When they learn this, they become themselves centres for spiritual influence. Now, it is very easy to assent to this, yet if we at the same time train them to depend upon the outward help that we give them, we are pulling down with one hand what we are building up

with the other. It will be answered that we must nurse them, while they are still but infants in the kingdom of God. There is, of course, truth in this; but I am satisfied that it is a great mistake to teach them to look to men as their chief helpers. They are to desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby, and they can get this best by coming directly to the Lord Jesus. (I Peter ii, 2–5.) They may have an easier time, if they take it from the minister nicely prepared for them, but they cannot grow strong unless they go for themselves to the Source. There is no stage of experience in which the soul cannot, and ought not to be taught directly of the Lord. The promise is without limitation: "*All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.*" When we seek to persuade men to believe in Christ, let us remember that our call will be of but little real benefit, unless it echoes the inward call of the Lord in their hearts. Our work is largely to arouse men to realize that the Lord is speaking to them, though they know it not. Let us have sufficient faith in the Holy Ghost to be willing to refrain from an amount of pressure on the unconverted, that will make them come more through our persuasion than through that of

the Lord. If they will but come to him because they realize that he is calling them, they will from the first have at least some knowledge of what it is to hear his voice, and they will from the first be strong Christians for their age. It may be objected that such a method will not bring in as many persons to the Church. It is quite possible there will be at any given time fewer brought to profess faith in Christ; but the proportion of those who faint by the way will be also less. It is not possible to prevent some from backsliding, but it is possible to limit the number of backsliders, and to greatly reduce it. This of itself would take away one of the great stumbling blocks to the progress of the kingdom of God on the earth. Again, those brought in this way, having an independent experience, are able to help others, and therefore the number of working members in the Church is enlarged, and the work goes on more steadily. In the long run, therefore, I believe that this method, if less exciting, wears better, and will bring the greater blessing, for the Church will become more and more a band of workers, and less and less a sanitarium for invalids. The free method of holding meetings for worship will prove the very best means for

strengthening Christian life. Even those who are brought in by means of more external methods, although the free way of conducting meetings does not come so easily to them, can be taught to understand and value it. In a meeting on the free method, there is a recognition alike of direct and instrumental means that may be used in building up a congregation. There is nothing that tends to despise or to disregard human instrumentalities, but the aim is to keep them in their place, where they will accomplish the greatest good; that is, in the position of subordination, the chief place being given, as it should be, to the direct teaching of the Lord, and the human coming in according as he shall direct it. So far from apathy, our position is to be one of intense earnestness, to do our share in bringing souls to the Lord. Our very zeal will make us keep under his direction in order that we may strive according to his working, that worketh in us mightily. This brings us naturally to

*Objection 4th. It is a very difficult thing to know what is the Lord's immediate guidance in regard to vocal service in such a meeting.* That this question presents difficulties, all will acknowledge. But this does not make the method defective. One great impediment in the way of some is that

they forget that the Lord's voice is to be learned by experience, and that we are to live in harmony with his will every day. If we do this, and are obedient to the extent of our knowledge in our daily lives, we have solved one great problem. We have learned what it is to live with the Lord. It will not be so difficult a matter to recognize his will in service, when we have become accustomed to it in daily living. We are also to be patient with ourselves and with one another, willing to be used, to speak or to keep silence, and then to act according to the best light we have. If we believe that it is right to open our lips, let us do so in sincerity and simplicity. If, afterward, we have reason to think that we were mistaken, let us not be discouraged, but seek to be more careful the next time. The same thing applies to having kept silence when we should have spoken. It is only by practice that we can learn clearly to know the true call. Sometimes the judgment of others comes in to help us in the matter. This should not be taken as a personal thing, but all advice that is given in this regard is to be carefully weighed and acted upon, if it comes home to our hearts with authority. "*The meek will he guide in judgment and the meek will he teach his way.*"

If what we have to speak comes to us with the feeling that we are better than those around us, and that we are going to set them right, then it is clearly not of the Lord. Even though the message be a severe one, there is no spirit of self-assertion in the mind of the man or woman who delivers it. It must come with a feeling of personal unworthiness, and of love and desire for a blessing on those to whom we speak. But no precise rules can be laid down. The individual must learn for himself to recognize the call when it comes. The great thing is to be simple, loving and obedient. When we see a course to be right, let us not be too careful to measure the degree of force with which the evidence comes. If I understand what is the right road to take, I follow it, whether the information comes to me in a low voice or a loud one; for all I desire to know is which is the proper direction. With zeal and obedience, patience and faith, and a willingness to receive suggestions, and an unwillingness to criticise others (for a critical spirit injures our own perception of guidance), there is nothing in this method to hinder any one from knowing whether his part is to be silent or to speak. Where there seems uncertainty, go in the way where light seems to

shine, or where most peace is felt. These are generally safe guides where the life is in harmony with God.

*Objection 5th. This method lacks variety.* On the contrary, if the meeting be conducted in the liberty that should characterize it, it is the one method that allows the utmost variety. Nothing is pre-arranged, but each one is left at liberty and encouraged to act as he may feel called, either in exhortation, teaching, confession, prayer, or praise. The only limitation is that all that is done shall be done under the personal sense of the divine will, and in mutual submission to one another's feelings and judgment. We can ride rough-shod over our own prejudices, but we cannot in love do so over those of others. When we must go against them, it is to be done with the utmost tenderness. Thus, there will be a variety in the amount and the character of the exercises as different places, and at different times. What may be called for at one time, is out of place at another. In some meetings there will be a great deal of vocal exercise, in others less, according to the needs of the people. The limitation that no one can act as leader is, of course, understood as an essential part of this method.

*Objection 6th. This is a method that is open to abuse, by some speaking out of order, and others not speaking when they should.* Where so much is left to individual faithfulness, there must be the risk of individual unfaithfulness. At the same time, I think that this difficulty has been much overrated. It is true that some, who do not understand the limitations, do sometimes speak out of order. But, as a rule, this can be regulated by a kindly word after the meeting is over. The more serious difficulty is when those who should, do not speak. This is a loss that is harder to discover and to make up. If the unfaithful ones could only see that by their unfaithfulness they are doing what they can to destroy the freedom and to bring in a system of bondage, I think that they would be careful how they continued unfaithful. But in a meeting held on this plan, the plan of freedom, these irregularities, even the latter kind, are a good deal in the control of the meeting itself. Where there is life in the congregation, and an earnest prayerful interest on the part of the more responsible members, those who would otherwise have spoken out of right ordering, will be much more easily controlled, and the timid hesitating ones will be made strong to

speak. In a word, the power that there is in the meeting will assert itself, and be felt, and the meeting will become more and more a meeting that answers to its true objects.

*Objection 7th. This method, having been tried, has been found a failure.* This I do not admit. It is essentially the method of the early church. It was tried at the rise of the Society of Friends, and proved a powerful means for the ingathering of many souls to the Lord, and for the upbuilding of Christian character. It was afterwards used more for the latter purpose, and it certainly answered this purpose well. What the reasons were that contributed to the change need not now be considered. But it is sufficient to point out that for the purposes that were in the minds of those who held the meetings, they were not failures. That a meeting held in a formal way is not a success, I freely admit. Also I admit, that a meeting held outwardly according to this method, by those who, in their hearts, do not fully believe in it, is oftener than not a failure. But where it has been held in the freedom, and by those who honestly believed that this was the right method, I believe it has been, that it is, and that it will be, a success. It is a method that, rightly understood,

is the very reverse of a stereotyped one. It can, so long as it keeps to its essential principle of direct individual approach to and guidance from the Lord, vary in its modes of expression within wide enough limits to satisfy the demands of different people, and different communities. It is this system that we, as Friends, have in our hands. What shall we do with it? Shall we give it up, or hold to it as a tradition, or study its capabilities and learn how to employ it with confidence, in the assurance that that method which depends most closely upon the Lord, and is in exact accord with the principles of worship that he laid down, must be the most effective, if properly understood and used?

It does indeed require faithfulness and devotion on the part of those who would employ it, but will any one plead for a method that does not? Even the youngest Christian can be faithful.

THE END.

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